

The Value of Scouting

The Scouter stood in the middle of a circle of parents and youth members at the group's year-end barbeque and stated, "I have some bad news...the membership fee is going to increase next year." The parent to my left asked me, "What was the fee last year?" and the parent to my right declared "Scouts are still the best deal in town". He further indicated that he had paid much more to sign up his Cub for a two-month sport program, plus was given a box of chocolate bars to sell or purchase on his own.

I have continued to use the phrase uttered by my fellow parent who stood on my right that evening. We are the best deal in town. Our fee guarantees a 12 month membership in the largest youth serving organization in the world. Each week, dedicated Scouters like you deliver fun, exciting and challenging programs. These have been time-tested and show that Scouting plays a valuable role in the development of our citizens of tomorrow. To apologize for our fee would suggest we question the value or quality of the product. I am confident we have a wonderful product that is delivered by the best volunteers in the country.

Each month this magazine features testimonials from scholarship recipients (see page 37) who express in their own words the value of Scouting in their lives. I often hear of business and community leaders who recognize the role Scouting has played in their personal development. I am confident their parents and the parents of all our youth members rarely question the value of the Scouting program. As I write this column I recall a story from New Brunswick where a man who was lost in the woods for two days credits Scouting with giving him the skills he needed to survive unscathed...until he got home and his wife had something to say about him getting lost in the first place.

There is a cost to joining Scouting. The cost, like other costs in life, continue to increase. Our challenge is to

keep those costs to a minimum and to ensure that we are open to all members of the community. My commitment is to continue to ensure all management aspects of the Movement remain consistent with the Scout Law, in particular being "wise in the use of our resources".

For those who truly cannot afford the fee there are remedies at the Council and Group level to address this issue. Approximately \$235,000 was provided last year by Councils and Groups in membership fee support to families who could not otherwise afford to register.

I encourage all Groups to get actively involved in our Popcorn sales program to provide greater financial stability at all levels of the Movement. Done properly, this program can meet most, if not all, the financial needs of Sections and Groups. Do you know that last year over \$4 million dollars remained in Scouting across Canada as a result of the 2004 popcorn campaign? Many are of the belief that most of the profit comes to "National". The National portion of the profit was \$200 thousand of the \$4 million. The rest was kept by Groups and Councils.

Further financial assistance can often be found with your employer. Many companies are willing to provide financial support directly to the Groups and Sections in which their employees serve as Scouters. Shell Canada is an example of this type of generosity. Check with your employer to see if they have similar programs.

One more point with respect to costs. Scouts Canada's camp fees are more than competitive with other organizations and private camps. This was very evident to me during a summer camp show held recently

in Ottawa. Again, we should not apologize for our camp costs. Our camp programs provide young people and their leaders with an experience that will provide them a lifetime of memories.

As we enter our 99th year of Scouting, let us do so proudly and with the confidence that Scouting is one of the valuable elements of a great community and well worth the membership fee.

Have a great Scouting year and I hope to see you around the campfire. X



Yours in Scouting,
Rob Stewart
Executive Commissioner & CEO



Photo: Sheila VanSchrack